

**HOW TO STRENGTHEN  
THE MIND TOWARDS  
RESILIENCE WITH  
BUDDHIST  
PSYCHOLOGY**

**how to cultivate positive qualities of the mind and  
reduce antagonists**



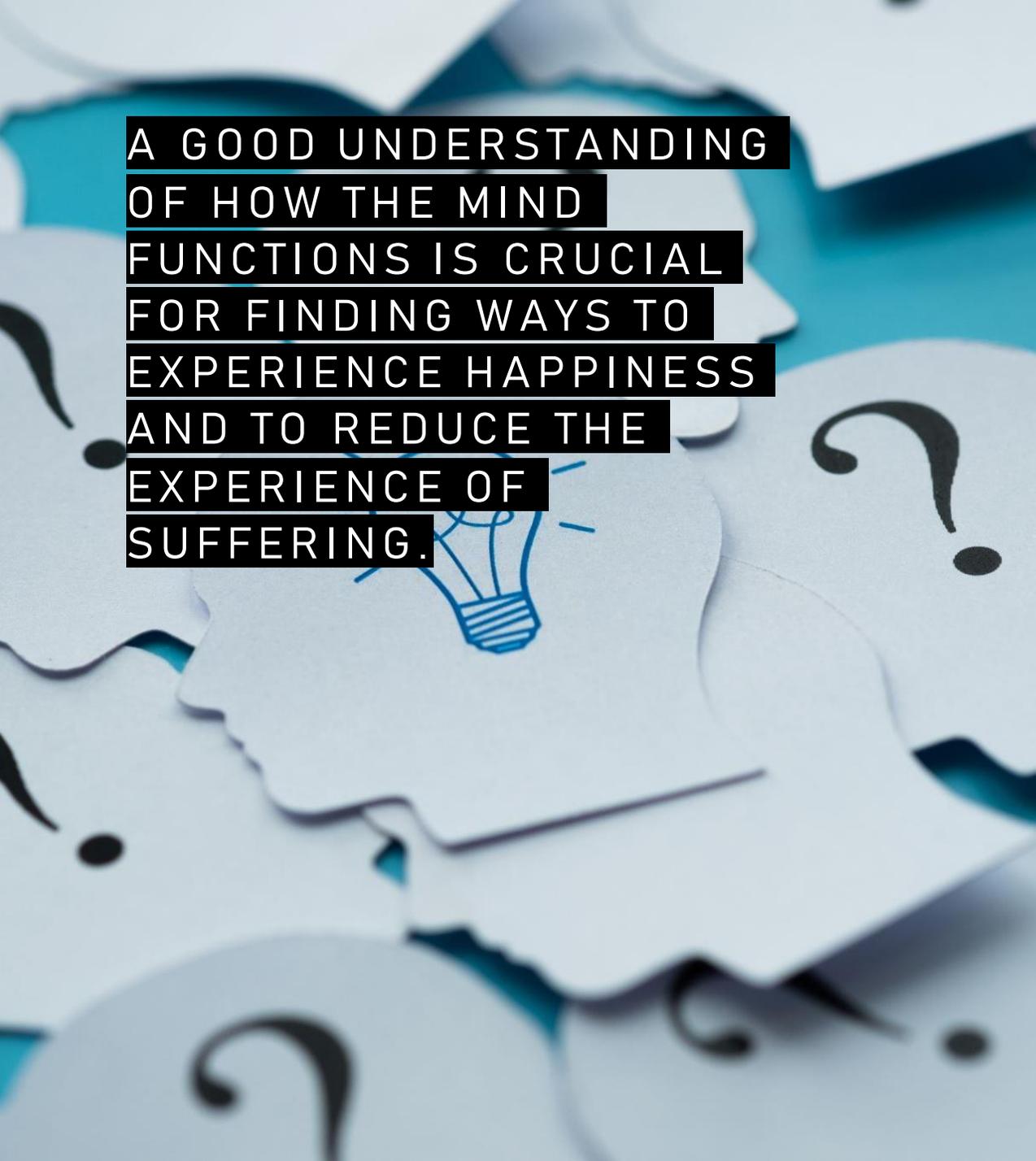
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- Graduate of the FPMT's Masters Program in Buddhist Studies (Italy)
- Graduate of the Mindfulness Teacher Certification Program by Tara Brach & Dr. Jack Kornfield (USA)
- Pre-Diploma Computer Science (Germany)
- Post-gradual Study of Theatre Education (Germany)
- Working with kids, young people, prisoners, drug addicts – with a focus on emotion regulation
- Local and international teacher based in Germany leading different Buddhism in-person and online study and meditation programs
- Specialized in dynamics of religious cults

HAPPINESS OR  
SUFFERING IS  
EXPERIENCED BY  
THE MIND.

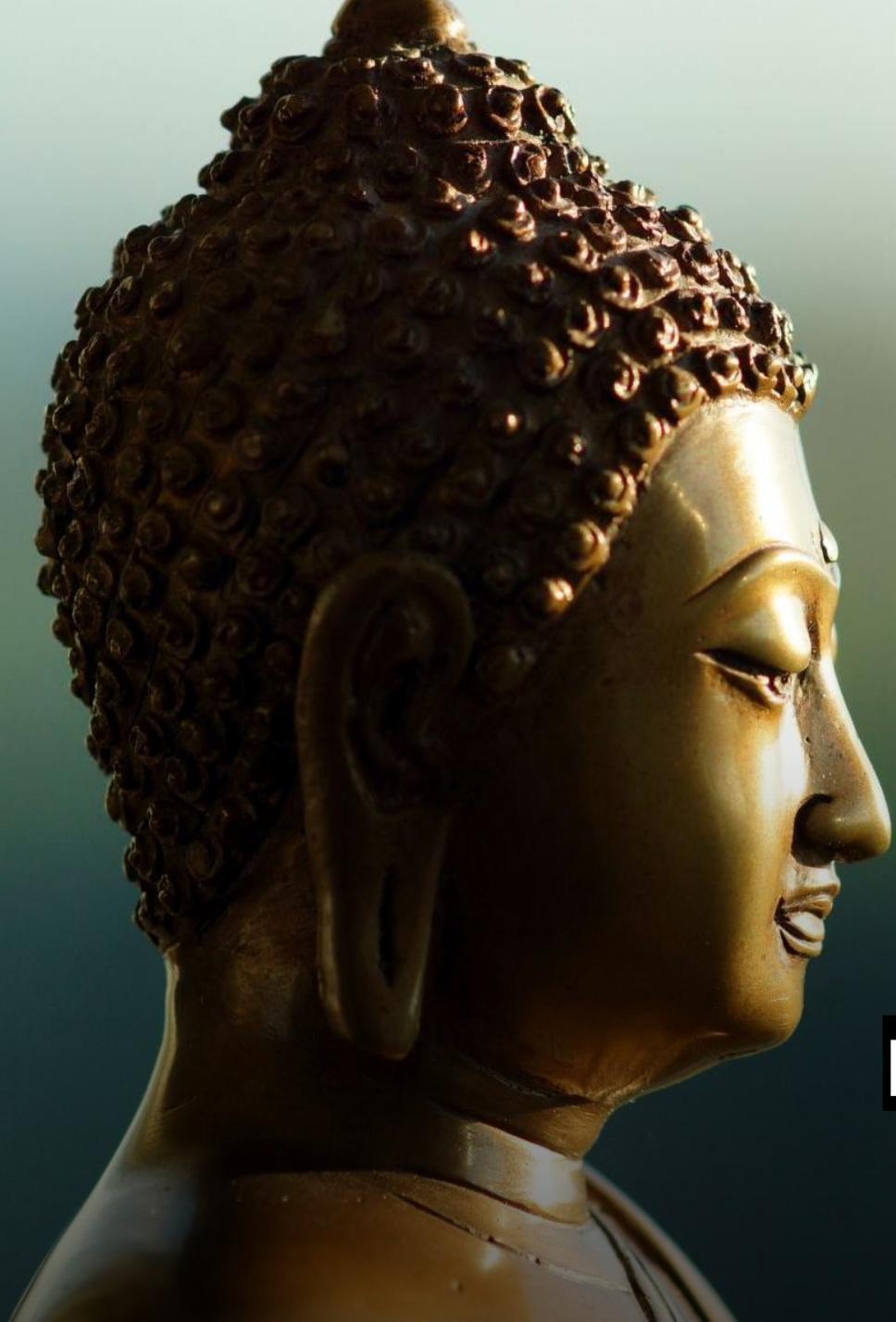
MIND IS FORMOST.



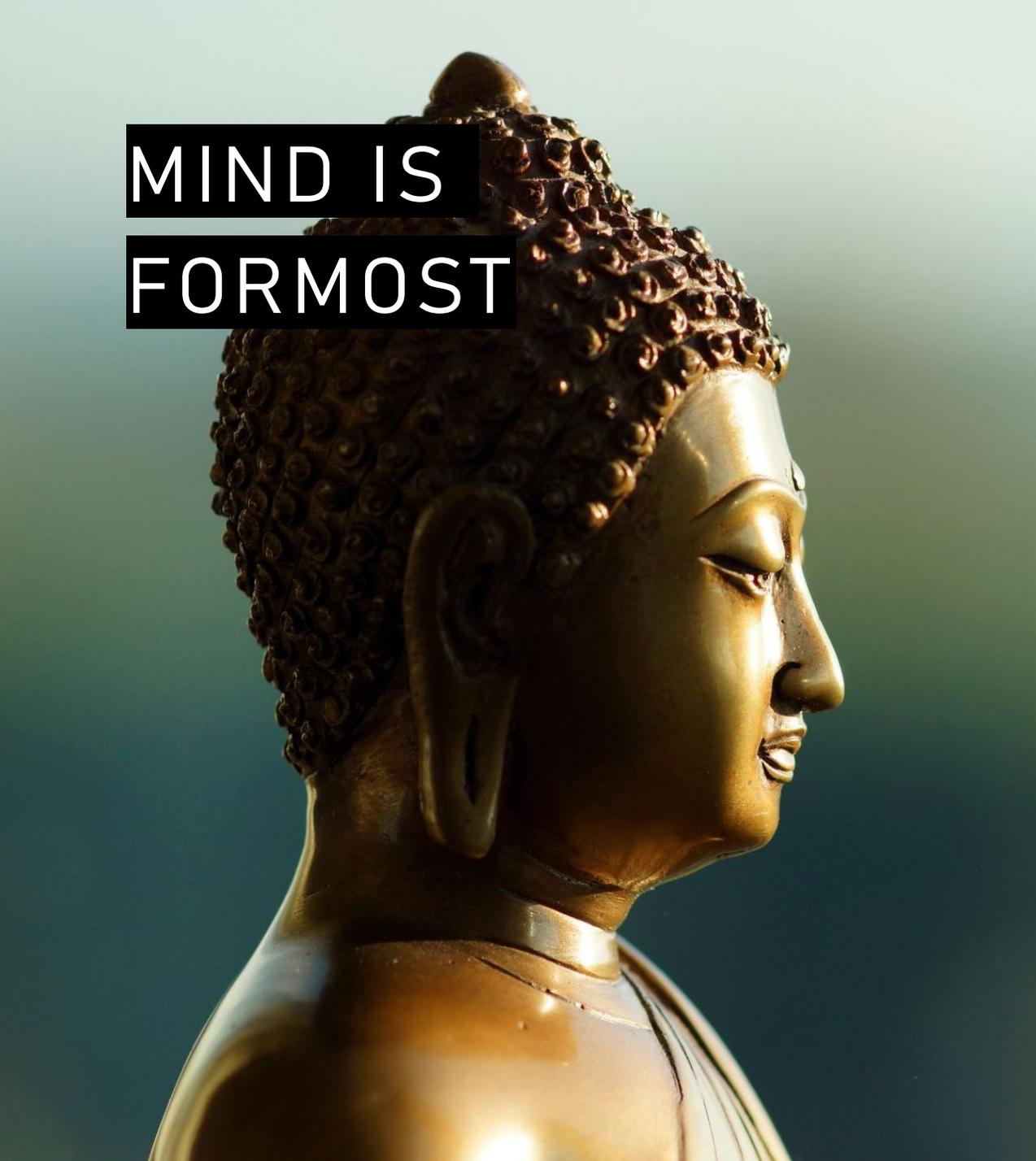


A GOOD UNDERSTANDING  
OF HOW THE MIND  
FUNCTIONS IS CRUCIAL  
FOR FINDING WAYS TO  
EXPERIENCE HAPPINESS  
AND TO REDUCE THE  
EXPERIENCE OF  
SUFFERING.

- If mind is foremost, the knowledge about dynamics of the mind and how to alter mind states is essential
- It's like having an axe at hand when wanting to cut trees,
- Or to have the knowledge how to cultivate a beautiful garden that can be enjoyed



BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY



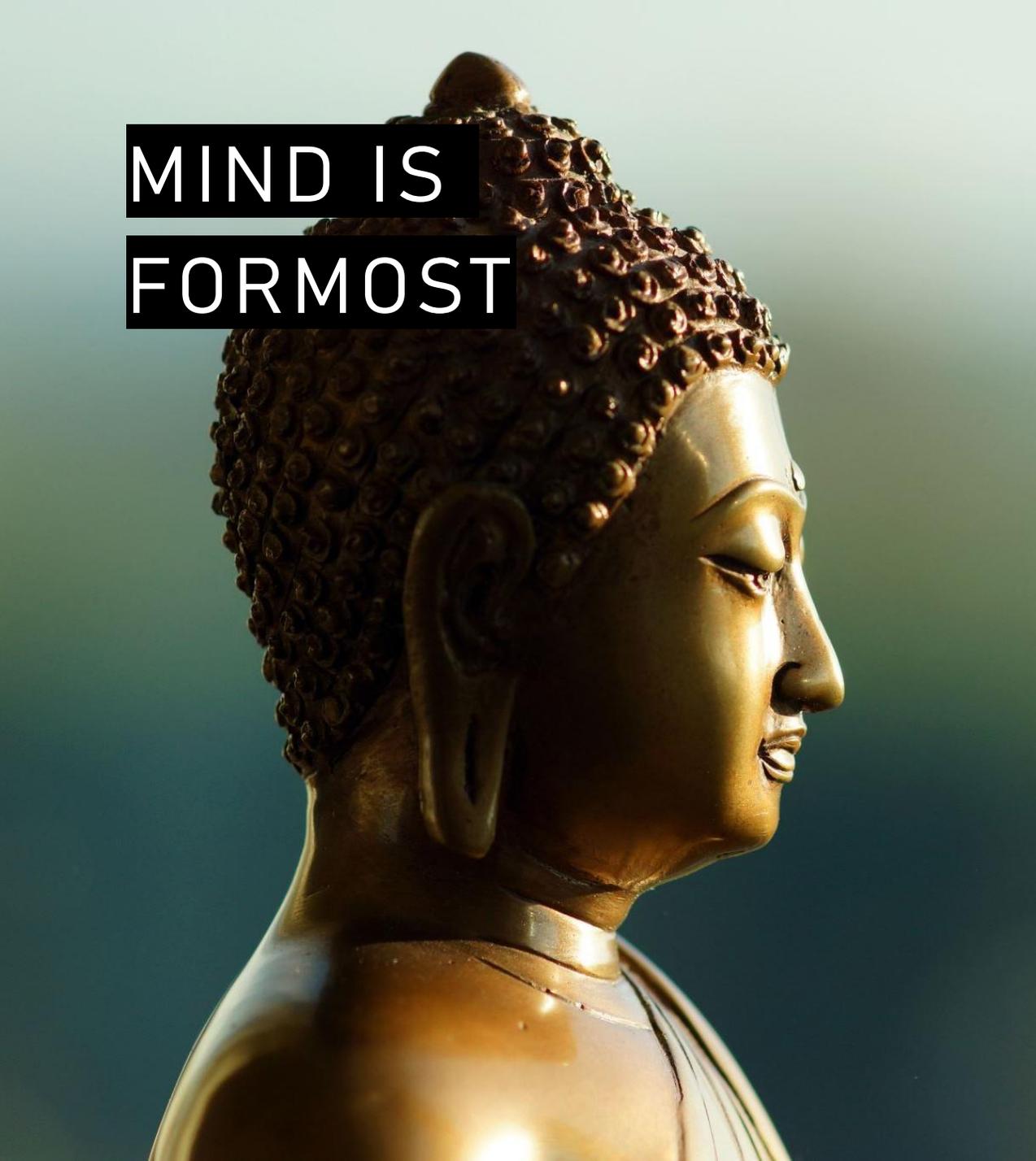
# MIND IS FORMOST

The Mind perceives and shapes

- what we are
- what and how we experience
- the world we perceive and respond to

You need a **mind** to

- Think of a house
- Visually see a house
- Distinguish it (own or other)
- Name it a house
- Create a house
- Maintain a house
- Feel how you feel in the house



# MIND IS FORMOST

## What CAN and CAN'T be controlled

- Events outside a person's mind are difficult to control
- But HOW one relates to events can be chosen
- The freedom to choose can be learned

## The Mind Changes

- Like everything in this world the mind is subject to change
- Humans generally prefer pleasant states of mind and avoid unpleasant states of mind



# SEARCHING FOR HAPPINESS

Wherever Mind is involved

- There is a wish to be happy (or to experience wellbeing)
- And a wish to not suffer (i.e. freedom from suffering, not to experience discomfort, pain or trouble)

This is a REALITY

Be AWARE of it

Find ACCEPTANCE of it



SEARCHING FOR  
HAPPINESS

## ACCEPTANCE:

Accept your natural desire to be happy: Like a mother lovingly holds her child → cherishing one's own longing to be happy

This forms the RELATIONSHIP

to oneself

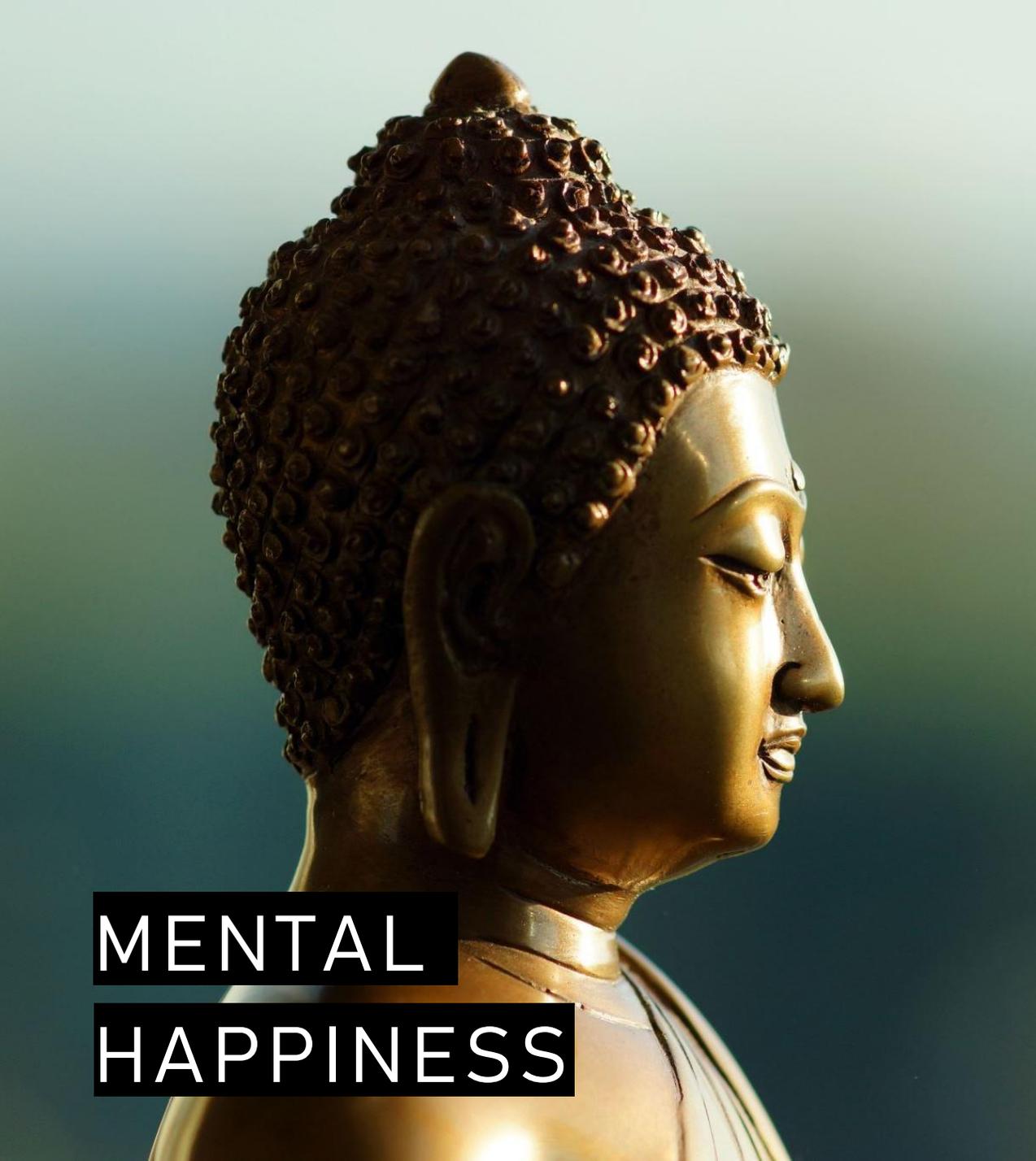
to others

Thereby creates COMPASSION for

oneself

others

→ To perceive suffering and the desire to find freedom from suffering



**MENTAL  
HAPPINESS**

Mental happiness and freedom from  
mental suffering

*is more important than*

Material happiness and freedom from  
material suffering

A pleasant feeling tone (skt. vedanā)  
and an unpleasant feeling tone can be  
experienced by all six main minds

- five senses consciousnesses
- mental consciousness



# CAUSES FOR HAPPINESS

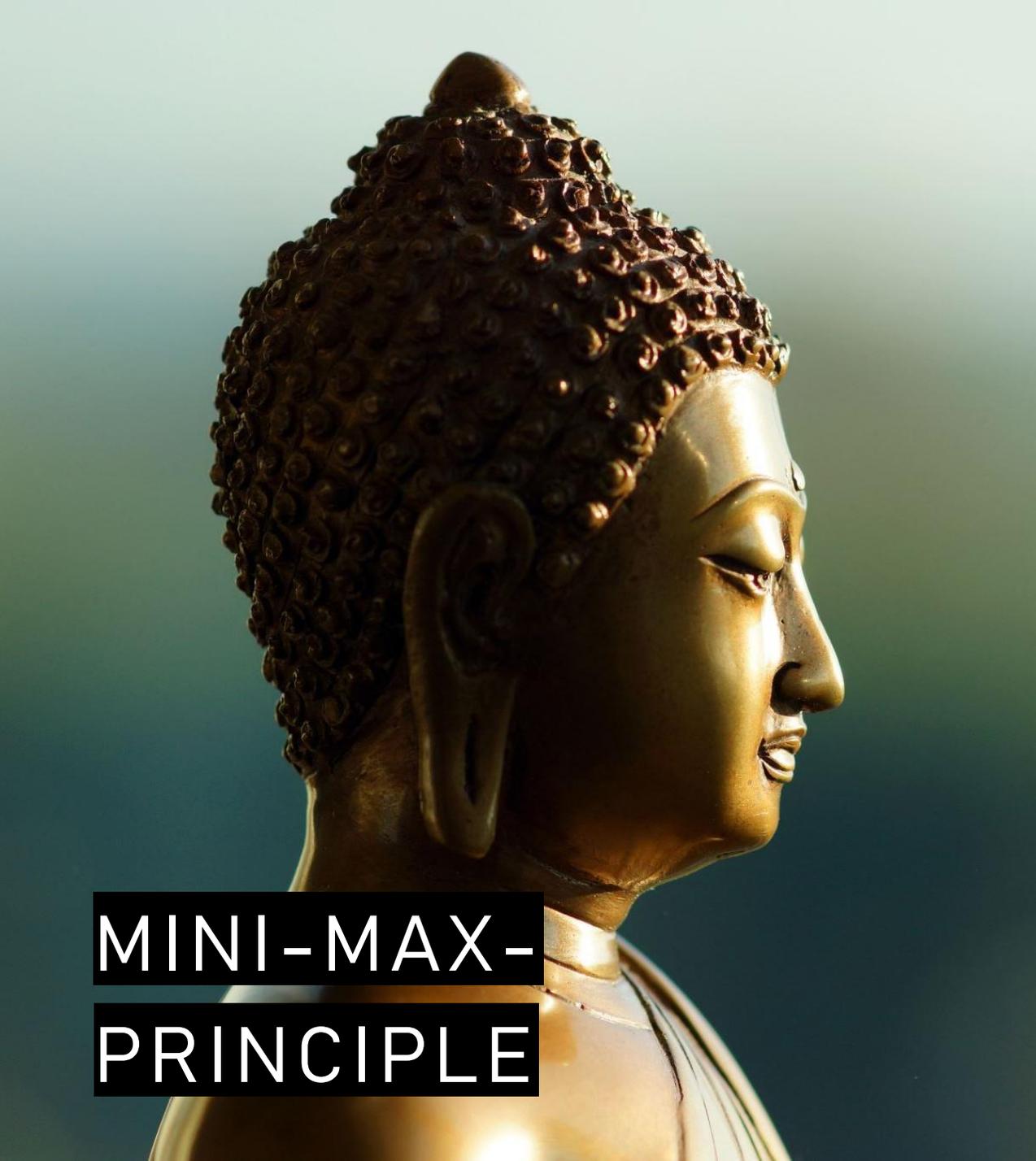
Causes for happiness and freedom from suffering can be  
detected  
analyzed

## WHOLESOME MENTAL STATES

are causes for  
(mental) happiness, inner peace  
Now and in the future

## UNWHOLESOME MENTAL STATES

are causes for  
(mental) unhappiness, inner conflict and suffering  
Now and in the future



**MINI-MAX-  
PRINCIPLE**

INCREASING wholesome mental  
states

and

DECREASING unwholesome  
mental states

is part of the spiritual endeavor  
(effort, skt. *vīrya*)



Effort (“joyous perseverance”) encompasses four activities

- 1) to prevent the initial development of destructive mental states (which have not yet manifested in the psyche)
- 2) to abandon the destructive mental states that have already manifested in the psyche
- 3) to cultivate constructive mental states (initiate and build up healthy mind resources)
- 4) to maintain such constructive mental states (strengthen the healthy mind and subsequently build up resilience by doing so).

WHAT ARE  
WHOLESOME  
(DESTRUCTIVE)  
AND  
UNWHOLESOME  
(DESTRUCTIVE)  
MENTAL STATES?



# BUDDHA



It is said, the Buddha used to say “ehipasiko” which means “come and see for yourself”.

The image shows three Buddhist monks from behind, standing in a row. They are wearing traditional maroon robes and holding large, circular red umbrellas with black ribs. The background is a softly lit room with light-colored curtains. A black rectangular box with white text is centered over the middle monk's umbrella.

**THREE GROUPS OF  
QUALITIES**

# THREE GROUPS OF QUALITIES

Collecting the mind (skt. samādhi) & Mindfulness (skt. smṛti)

- Focused
- Attentive
- Open awareness

Constructive/Heart Qualities

- Loving Kindness, Compassion, gratitude etc.
- Values, Perceptions, Beliefs

De-Constructive

- Insight through analysis of object/subject
- Non-Dualism



**MINDFULNESS**



# MINDFULNESS



- There are different definitions and understandings of mindfulness!\* Most known is that of Kabat-Zinn.
- “Right Mindfulness”: *“And what, monks, is right mindfulness? Here, a monk dwells contemplating the body in the body, **ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful,** having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. ... This is called right mindfulness.”\**
- Basically **mindfulness** (skt.: smṛti) and **clear comprehension** (or introspection, skt. samprajñāna) should coexist.
- Based on both mental qualities can be  
cultivated,  
strengthened  
nourished

\* see: [“Is Mindfulness Present-Centered and Nonjudgmental? A Discussion of the Cognitive Dimensions of Mindfulness”](#) by Georges B. Dreyfus

\* DN 22.21 (II 313; LDB 348-49). MN 141.30 (III 252; MLDB 1100-1101). SN 45:8 (V 9-10; CDB 1529)

# MINDFULNESS



- Mindfulness in broader sense unites different mental processes:
- The process of mindfulness (skt.: smṛti)
- The process of introspection or awareness (skt. samprajñāna)
- Both form a basis i.e. for the mental quality of “concentration” (collecting the mind, uniting the scattered mind, skt. samādhi).

# MINDFULNESS



How does mindfulness feel?

- open,
- receptive
- soft,
- being present,
- clear,
- peaceful,
- spacious
- calm,
- flexible,
- alive,
- centered,
- subtle joy

Realms of Mindfulness

- internal, external, both

# MINDFULNESS



- Mindfulness based Stress Reduction (MBSR), J. Kabat-Zinn
- Mindfulness based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Z.V. Segal
- Mindfulness based Relapse Prevention (MBRP), S.Bowen
- Mindfulness based Eating Awareness Training (MB-eat)
- Mindfulness based childbirth and parentin program (MBCP)



THE HEART QUALITIES



# THE HEART QUALITIES

- **Loving Kindness, Compassion**

- Metta-Meditation
- Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT), P. Gilbert
- Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC), K.Neff, C.Germer
- Mindfulness based Compassionate Living (MBCL), E.v.d.Brink, F.Koster

- **Values, Beliefs**

- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), S.Hayes

# TRAINING THE QUALITIES



A close-up photograph showing a person's hands holding a string of light-colored prayer beads. To the right, a small, weathered Buddha statue is visible, wearing a dark, multi-strand beaded necklace. The background is dark and out of focus.

## TRAINING THE QUALITIES

each mind quality has an antagonist.  
Or each antagonist has a countering quality

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a string of white prayer beads. To the right, a small, weathered Buddha statue is visible, resting on a stack of wooden blocks. The background is a soft-focus blue fabric.

# QUALITIES AND ANTAGONISTS

- Love vs. Hate
- Rejoicing vs. Envy
- Cherishing Attitude vs. Lacking Cherishing Attitude
- Patience (Peaceful Acceptance) vs. Anger
  - being able to be in peace with pain and difficulties vs. intolerance with uncomfortable feelings → ACT
- Gratitude vs. Taking Everything as Granted (or being in a constant complaining mode)
- No Greed/Letting go of Greed vs. Greed
- Contentment vs. Greed
- Understanding vs. Ignorance (→ Hannah Arendt: "I want to understand!")
- Intelligence vs. Not Comprehending Things
- Wisdom vs. Ignorance
- Compassion vs. Cruelty

A photograph of a person in a blue shirt holding a string of white prayer beads. In the foreground, a small, weathered Buddha statue is visible, adorned with a dark beaded necklace. The background is softly blurred, showing the person's hands and the beads.

# QUALITIES AND ANTAGONISTS

- Affection vs. Aversion
- Generosity vs. Stinginess
- Wholesome Motivation vs. Unwholesome Motivation (medical doctor earning money / helping patients)
- Joyous Perseverance vs. Sloth / Laziness
- Faith (in trustworthy things) vs. (excessive) Disbelief (in trustworthy things)
- Trusting One's Intuition vs. Not Trusting One's Intuition
- Humility vs. Pride
- Ethical Orientation vs. Non-Ethics
- Self-Discipline vs. Lack of Self-Discipline
- Mental Pliancy vs. mentally Harsh or Tied Attitude
- Tolerance vs. Intolerance
- Indulgence vs. Revenge/Grudge
- Forgiveness vs. Revenge/Grudge
- Consciousness vs. Non-Consciousness
- Authenticity vs. Incongruency regarding one's values or inner being
- Respect vs. Disrespect

A person wearing a blue shirt is holding a string of white prayer beads. In the foreground, there is a small, weathered Buddha statue with a dark, beaded necklace. The background is a soft-focus blue and white patterned surface.

# QUALITIES AND ANTAGONISTS

- Shame vs. Non-Shame (complex topic, healthy sense of shame vs. toxic shame)
- Concentration (Flow, Collecting the mind) vs. Distractions (Being inwardly scattered and in States of Unrest)
- Openness vs. Close Mindedness
- Impartiality vs. Partisan Attitude
- Letting Go vs. Clinging
- Composure/Serenity vs. Tight Fistedness
- Bravery vs. Insecurity (complex!)
- Truthfulness vs. Deceptiveness
- Honesty vs. Lying and Deception
- Being Self-Aware vs. Not Being Self-Aware [mindfulness & introspection]

A person wearing a blue shirt is holding a string of white prayer beads. In the foreground, there is a small, weathered Buddha statue with a dark, beaded necklace. The background is a soft-focus blue and white patterned surface.

# QUALITIES AND ANTAGONISTS

- Being Relaxed vs. Not Being Relaxed
- Humor vs. Taking Oneself and Things too Seriously
- Introspection (Self-Awareness) vs. Non-Introspection (Lack of Self-Awareness)
- Mindfulness vs. Non-mindfulness
- Loose Self-Centredness vs. Tight Self-Centredness
- Being Able to Admit Faults vs. Hiding Faults
- ...
- there are far more qualities, eg. Helpfulness, Creativity, Curiosity, Inner Fulfillment...

# THREE GROUPS OF QUALITIES AIMING



For a calm, peaceful mind / a joy to be in the present moment



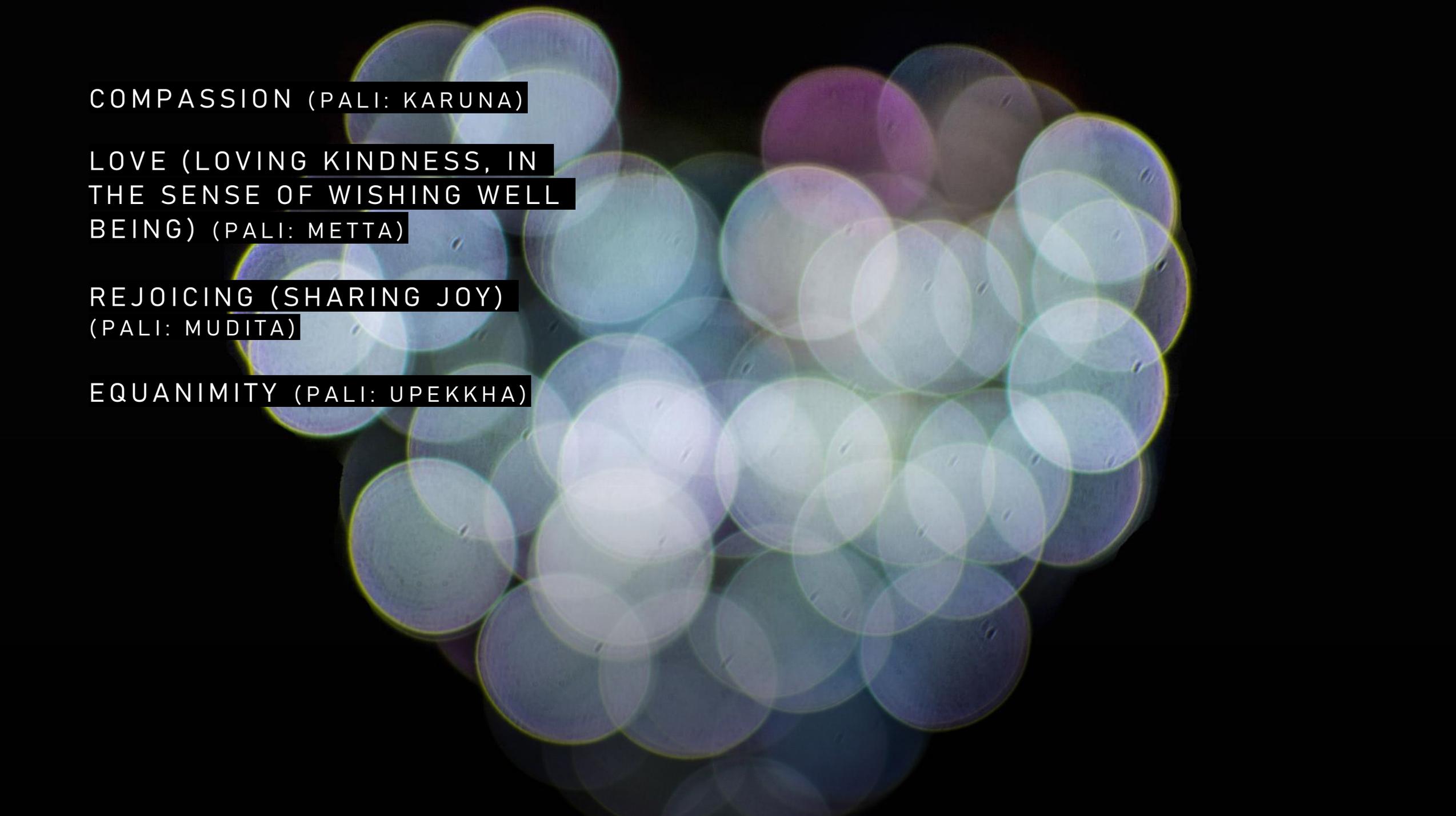
to increase the heart qualities



to deconstruct complex and fixing inner patterns



FOUR HEART QUALITIES:  
BRAHMAVIHĀRAS  
(DEVINE ABODES)



COMPASSION (PALI: KARUNA)

LOVE (LOVING KINDNESS, IN  
THE SENSE OF WISHING WELL  
BEING) (PALI: METTA)

REJOICING (SHARING JOY)  
(PALI: MUDITA)

EQUANIMITY (PALI: UPEKKHA)

DIRECTLY OPPOSING POWERS VS. "UNTRUE QUALITIES" (FEEL LIKE PROXIMITY)

BRAHMAVIHARA	NEARENEMY	FAR ENEMY
Compassion	Pity	Cruelty
Love	Selfish attachment (clinging)	Hate (Ill Will)
Rejoicing	Exuberance	Envy
Equanimity	Indifference	Craving, Clinging

# TRAINING

Success to cultivate a specific quality depends on training

- Regular
- Like building of physical muscle
- Mental Qualities are „muscles of the mind“
- Regular practice can be Mental Gym



# TWO TYPES OF TRAINING

- 1) a formal and at best regular meditation practice\* and
- 2) daily life in which the mental specific quality one wants to increase is applied

\* or other methods that cause *familiarization* (like visualizations, role plays etc., also reading/hearing or thinking about, discussing such qualities)





MOTIVATION

# MOTIVATION

- Reflecting and recollecting the benefits of the quality
- Reflecting and recollecting the benefits of getting more freedom from the tight grip of the antagonistic power of that quality

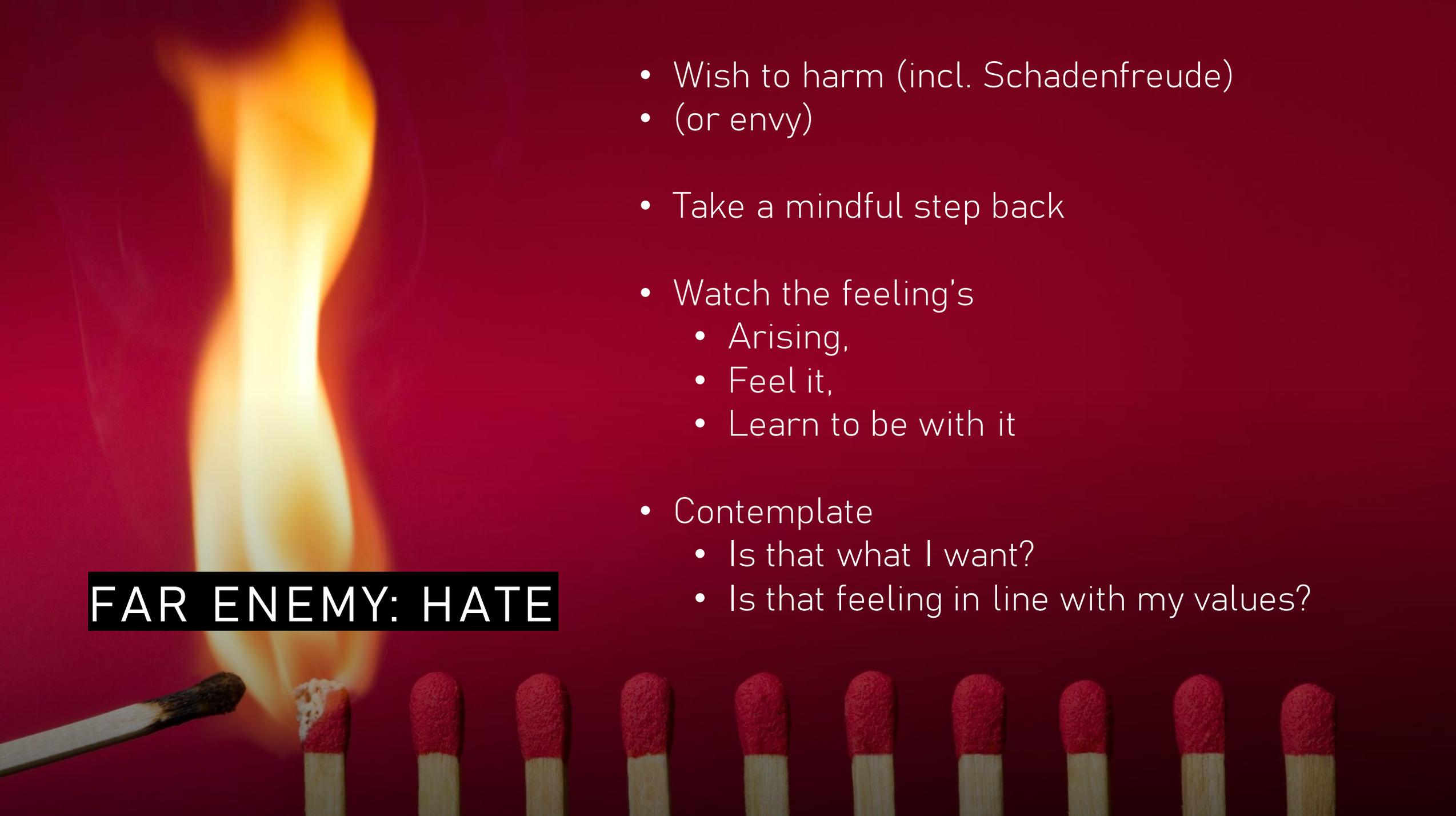


# LOVING KINDNESS

A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together. The hand on the left is older, with visible wrinkles and a silver bracelet. The hand on the right is younger and appears to be supporting the older hand. The background is bright and out of focus, suggesting an outdoor setting.

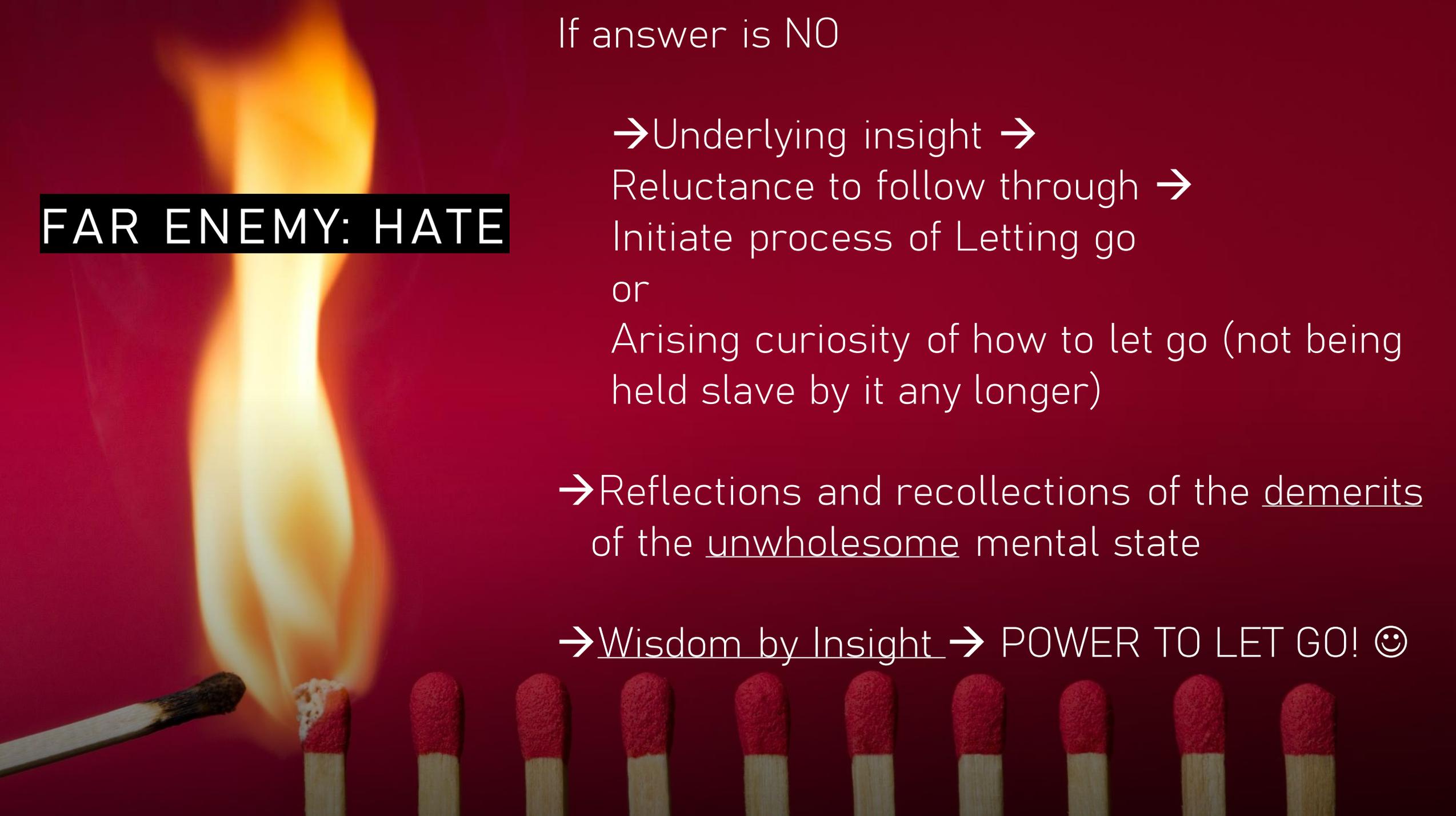
- Secular meditation practices
- Applied when wanting to raise or increase that quality
- Regular
- 2-5 minutes already helpful

- Daily live application
- Spontaneously
- Through lens of that quality
- Regular
- 3-10 attempts daily

A lit matchstick with a large flame, and a row of unlit matchsticks below it. The background is a dark red color.

## FAR ENEMY: HATE

- Wish to harm (incl. Schadenfreude)
- (or envy)
- Take a mindful step back
- Watch the feeling's
  - Arising,
  - Feel it,
  - Learn to be with it
- Contemplate
  - Is that what I want?
  - Is that feeling in line with my values?



## FAR ENEMY: HATE

If answer is NO

- Underlying insight →  
Reluctance to follow through →  
Initiate process of Letting go  
or  
Arising curiosity of how to let go (not being held slave by it any longer)
- Reflections and recollections of the demerits  
of the unwholesome mental state
- Wisdom by Insight → POWER TO LET GO! 😊

# SUMMARY OF WAY FOR CULTIVATING QUALITIES

1. reflecting or recollecting the merits or demerits of a quality and its counter force
2. cultivating the quality through a formal (regular if possible) meditation practice (or similar methods for familiarization)
3. applying the quality in daily life (setting specific aims where and when one wants to reactivate / train the quality)
4. learning to detect the antagonistic force of the quality and then working skillfully with it in order to loosen its grip on oneself
5. in the evening one could recapitulate the own training, rejoicing in where it worked, reconsidering why / where it didn't work and forming a motivation to train again the next day.
6. In the morning, while waking up, one could remember one's training, make a strong determination to use the day to continue the training and one could make a dedication "May my training be successful and may this quality increase like the waxing moon – in myself and others. ..."

Alternatively, journaling and other methods, like visualizations or role games etc. which are already used – for instance in gratitude trainings – can be used here too.



**FOUR METHODS TO DEAL WITH  
“COUNTER FORCES”**



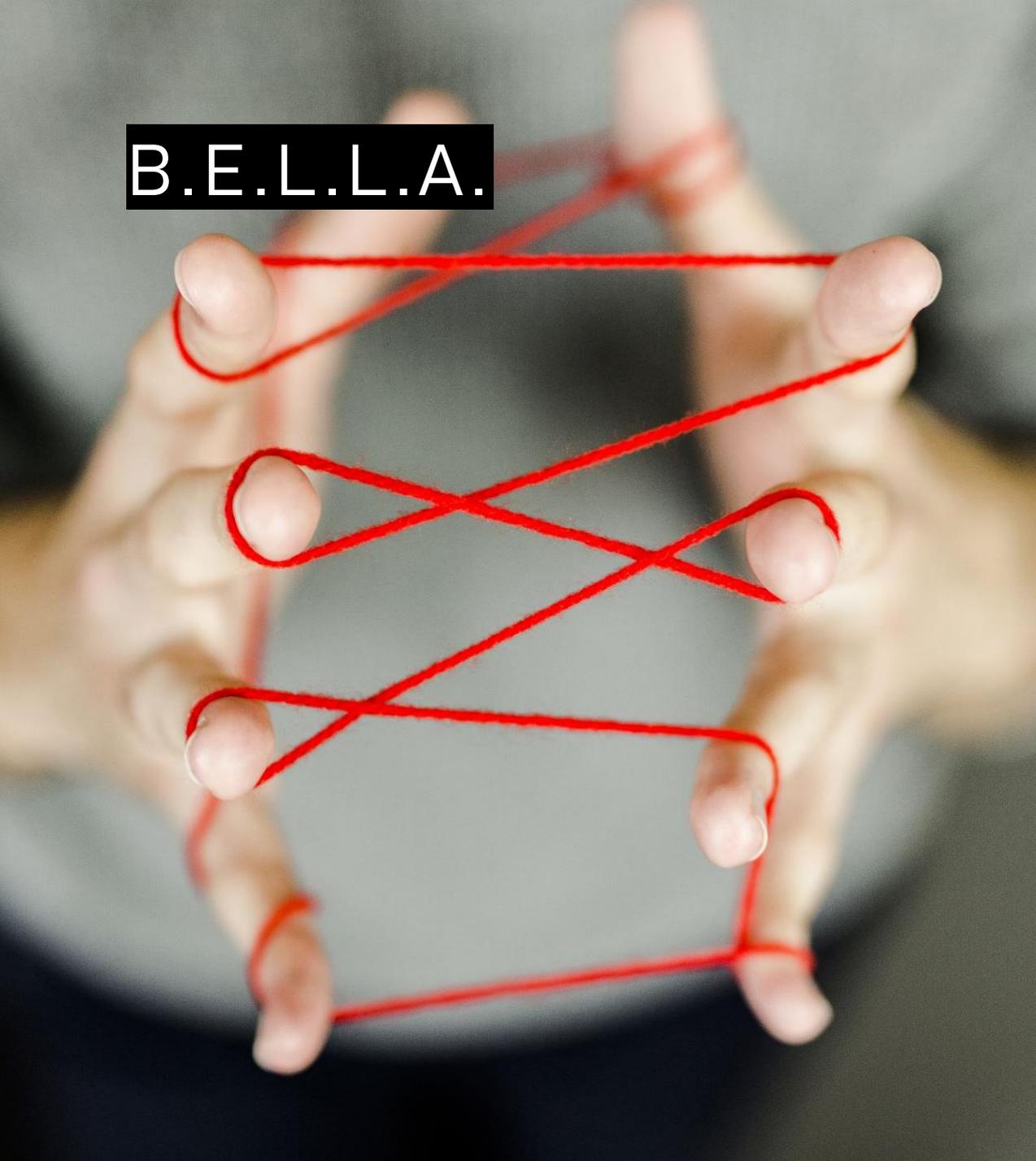
**DEAL WITH  
QUALITY  
HINDRANCES /  
DESTABILIZING  
EMOTIONAL  
STATES**

- R.A.I.N. – Tara Brach
- B.E.L.L.A. – Gil Fronsdal
- Self Compassion – Kristin Neff /  
Chris Germer
- Five Ways – Tilmann Borghardt &  
Wolfgang Erhardt

# R.A.I.N.



- **R**ecognize what is happening
- **A**llow the experience to be there, just as it is
- **I**nvestigate with interest and care
- **N**urture with self-compassion (alternatively non-identification)



**B.E.L.L.A.**

- **B** e with it (not acting on it, not reacting to it)
- **E** xamine (conditions that caused its arising and its dissolving)
- **L** essen (the grip of it, soften the tension)
- **L** et go
- **A** ppreciate



SELF-

COMPASSION

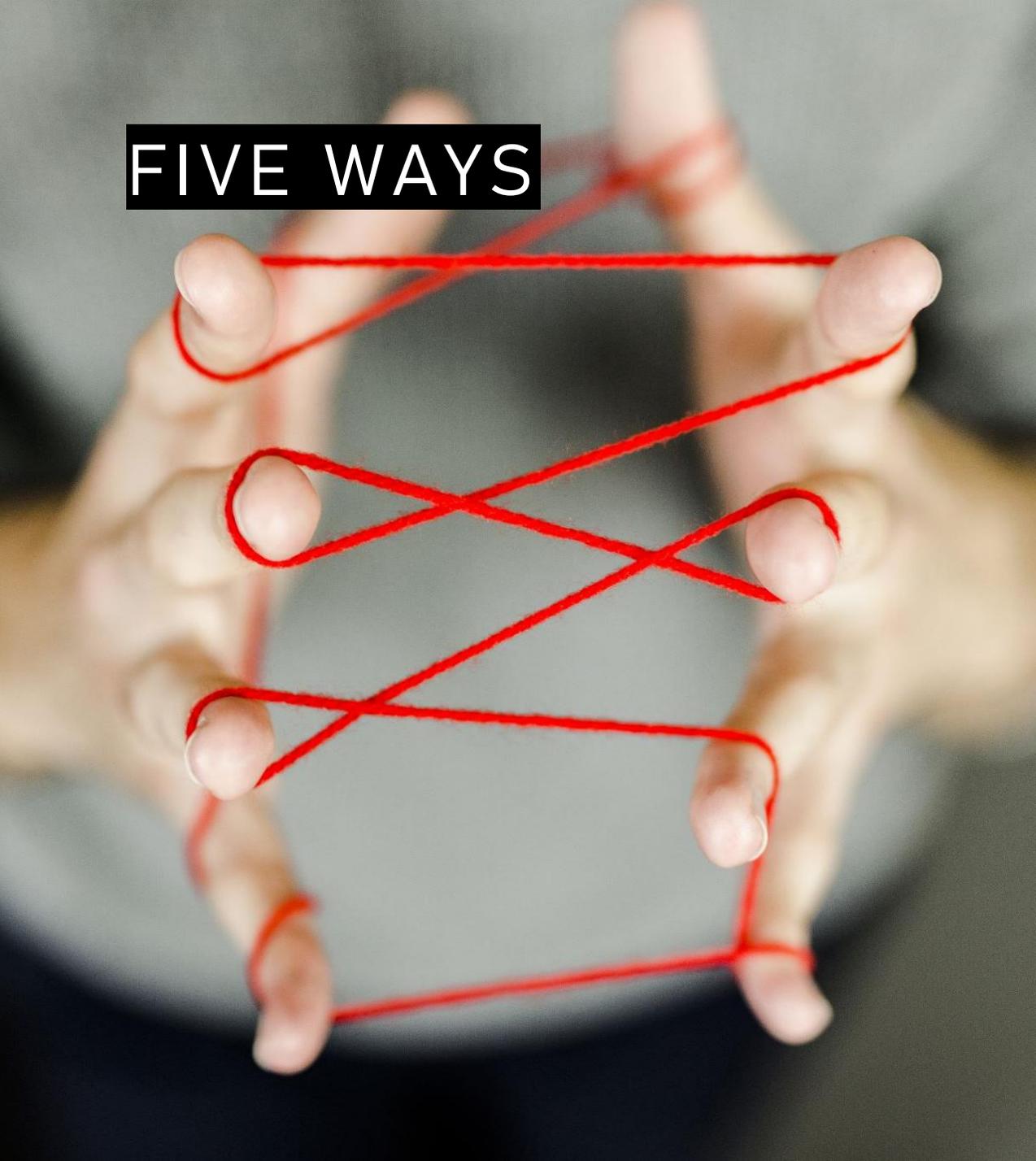
Neff:

- This is a moment of suffering
- Suffering is a part of life
- May I be kind to myself in this moment

Germer:

- The sympathetic gaze
- The compassionate touch
- Compassionate words

# FIVE WAYS



1. pause mindfully in the emotion\*
2. use appropriate tools
3. take a different view of the emotion
4. recognise the actual nature of the emotion
5. use stressful emotions as a pathway

\* find a space between the emotion and the response

CULTIVATING  
INNER  
STRENGTHS IN A  
CHILDREN  
MINDFULNESS  
PROGRAMM





# HAPPINESS

After all happiness is a question of  
choice between the discomfort to  
become aware of ones own mental  
afflictions and the discomfort to be  
controlled by those afflictions

*(Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche)*



## THE SPACE

“There is a space between stimulus and reaction. In this space lies our power to choose our reaction. In our reaction lies our development and our freedom.”

*(Viktor Frankl)*